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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. BEEF, U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage October 24-26 on the Taiwan government's decision to open its market to U.S. bone-in-beef and beef products; on the elections for the KMT's central standing committee; and on the Taiwan's Chinese Professional Baseball league playoffs.

¶2. Regarding the decision by the Taiwan government to open the Taiwan market to U.S. bone-in-beef, editorials and columns in most local newspapers lambasted the government for a poor and opaque decision-making process. Also, the editorials and commentaries criticized the Taiwan government's reported calculation to open Taiwan's market to U.S. bone-in-beef in exchange for resuming negotiations on the U.S.-Taiwan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) and other favors from the United States. They argued this has put the people of Taiwan's health at risk. Concerning U.S.-China-Taiwan relations, two articles in the KMT-leaning, China focused "Want Daily" alleged that the United States has decided to get involved in the cross-Straits political dialogues, judging from various comments made recently by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Kurt M. Campbell. Another editorial in the pro-independence "Taiwan News," reflected on the remarks made by American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) Director William A. Stanton at a press conference last week. The editorial urged the Obama administration to avoid harboring a naive mentality when dealing with Beijing. End summary.

¶3. U.S. Beef

A) "Suspending the Importation"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] editorialized (10/24):

"... We think that the government should suspend the import of U.S. beef. Also, [the government should] immediately hold public hearings and allow domestic and international experts as well as consumer interest groups to express their views; make assessments on various issues; and try to come up with other coordinated measures.

"Only after the consensus is reached domestically can the import of U.S. beef not cause disasters. Otherwise, even if [the U.S. beef] was imported [into Taiwan] forcibly, the U.S. beef would not win the hearts of consumers and could not have a market. The United States' strong attitude could also hurt the feelings of the Taiwan people. Because of the Ma Ying-jeou administration's weakness and lack of ability, the experience of South Korean [President]'s Lee Myung-bak is very likely to be restaged in Taiwan. These developments would not be something that we would be happy to see."

B) "U.S. Beef and the Livelihood of Taiwan's People"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (10/26):

"... There are three controversial points in the 'dispute over U.S. beef.' First, the scale of relaxation [on restrictions on U.S. beef] exceeds the normal scope. In addition to bone-in steaks, the import of a great amount of offal has put the health of the Taiwan people at risk. Second, the policy making was opaque. Especially when the health authorities' opinions were not fully respected, the National Security Council, which had a leading role in the policy making, did not need to face public opinion. Third, the [Taiwan] government was not sincere enough to communicate with the society. [The Taiwan government] constantly used confusing language, such as 'not import in principle,' 'both sides [in the United States and Taiwan] had private understandings, to mislead the public and create ambiguity. ...

"It is reported that the reason Taiwan made significant concessions was in exchange for the [resumption of] negotiations on the U.S.-Taiwan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) as well as [for] the United States to relax its restrictions to allow cabinet-level officials to visit Taiwan. No matter what, it is unbelievable to put the people's health on the negotiating table to make a political deal. ..."

C) "How Were the Negotiations Conducted!"

A column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] wrote (10/26):

"... Judging from the level of the Taiwan people's pro-U.S. attitude, it is unlikely that large-scale protests such as those in South Korea several years ago would happen in Taiwan. However, the [Taiwan] government cannot think that it has gone through the test safely. It is because, compared with the beef issue, Taiwan's negotiations with the other side [of the Taiwan Strait] on an

Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) involve more complicated political and economic issues as well as feelings. If the [Taiwan] government is incapable of dealing with the beef issue, how can people believe that they [the Taiwan government] can safeguard the interests of Taiwan when they negotiate the ECFA [with China]!"

D) "U.S. Beef: Unbalanced Multilateral Relations"

The KMT-leaning, China-focused "Want Daily" [circulation: 10,000] editorialized (10/26):

"... What we should try to understand deep down is why we must make such a compromise and concession. According to our understanding, it is because the United States hopes that Taiwan will not lean toward China on issues such as business interests and cross-strait relations. Taiwan, on the other hand, hopes to resume [the negotiations on] the U.S.-Taiwan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) by fully opening Taiwan's market to U.S. beef as a way to dispel the United States' worries that Taiwan would lean toward China after signing an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) with China. If these accounts were true, we believe that the [Taiwan] government, which had pledged solemnly that the ECFA will not be leaning toward China at all, has already lost its own position. Using the safety of the Taiwan people as a price to 'balance' the trilateral relations among Taiwan, China and the United States has totally deviated from the principle of 'putting Taiwan first for the benefit of the people.' It is a serious loss of equilibrium. ..."

14. U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

A) "The United States' Role in Cross-Strait Relations"

Professor Edward Chen from Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of American Studies (GIAS) wrote in a column of the KMT-leaning, China-focused "Want Daily" [circulation: 10,000] (10/25):

"... So far, regarding Washington's views about the cross-strait negotiations, no one has expressed the views more clearly than American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) Chairman Raymond Burghardt. At the end of March 2008 before Ma Ying-jeou assumed office, Burghardt visited Ma and recommended that cross-strait dialogues be conducted through three stages of development. At the first stage, the three

links [of postal, transportation and trade] and allowing Chinese tourists to visit Taiwan could be dealt with. At the second stage, deep-level economic and trade issues could be discussed to make the cooperation on economic, trade and investment [issues] more open than before. This stage has almost come to an end. The third stage will touch on political issues such as a cross-Straits peace agreement, the reduction of military threats, and participating in international organizations. ...

"At the moment, the cross-Straits dialogue is going to enter into the third stage of [dealing with] political issues. United States Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, whose position in the United States State Department is only under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, said that he hoped that both sides of the Taiwan Strait could move to negotiate on 'confidence-building measures (CBMs).' In fact, as is mentioned in this article earlier, the United States has been playing a key role in the cross-Straits negotiations on signing an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). Now, when the cross-Straits negotiations on economic issues are almost concluded and the negotiations on political issues have not yet started, the United States has decided to get involved. While giving a speech at an event discussing the rise of China on September 24, 2009, Steinberg encouraged both sides of the Taiwan Strait to push forward the 'confidence-building measures (CBMs).' He said that if both sides of the Taiwan Strait start negotiations on CBMs, cross-Straits relations will be more stable and amicable. However, Steinberg did not elaborate clearly on his remarks. ..."

B) "The Reason that the United States Gets Involved in Cross-Straits Negotiations"

Professor Edward Chen from Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of American Studies (GIAS) wrote in a column of the KMT-leaning, China-focused "Want Daily" [circulation: 10,000] (10/26):

"United States Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt M. Campbell's remarks are further proof of Washington's resolution to get involved in Asian and cross-Straits affairs. While giving a speech in Washington on October 19, 2009, [Campbell] said that what the United States needs to do the most in Asia is to 'show up' and let Asian countries feel the existence and commitments of the United States. ...

"From Campbell's remarks, [it can be seen that] the United States has at least three goals. First, Washington intends to show Beijing

that, during President Barack Obama's visit to China, the United States will not hurt Taiwan's interests. Second, Washington did not avoid revealing that the United States will have a competition of the dragon and the eagle with China in Southeast Asia. Third, it was a response to Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg's remarks encouraging both sides of the Taiwan Strait to push forward the 'confidence-building measures (CBMs).' ...

"There are at least the following three reasons why the United States would like to play a role in the cross-Straits negotiation process. First, the United States feels that the speed of cross-Straits developments has exceeded expectations. If the United States does not get involved now, it would become an outside observer. Second, once both sides of the Taiwan Strait launch negotiations on issues that have high political sensitivity, the United States should actively participate in [the negotiations] through track two channels to understand the development of cross-Straits relations and negotiations which might have an impact on the national interests of the United States. Furthermore, the United States does not want to be an observer or an outsider. Only by making itself play the roles of promoter, facilitator, supervisor, arbitrator and guarantor can the United States say something during the cross-Straits negotiations and bring its clout with both sides of the Taiwan Strait into full play."

C) "U.S. Needs Balanced Policy Toward Taiwan"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (10/26):

"In his first meeting with the Taiwan news media last week, newly arrived American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) Taipei representative

William A. Stanton focused on reemphasizing that there will be no change in Washington's policy toward Taiwan under the new Democratic administration of President Barack Obama in line with the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). Even though Stanton delivered a reassuring message that 'there is no reason to be concerned about Taiwan in particular' with regard to President Obama's slated visit to the People's Republic of China, we urge Washington to take more seriously the exacerbating imbalance in cross-strait relations and the potential negative impacts on both Taiwan and American strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region. ...

"In his discussion with local media, Stanton stated that one of the most critical topics for the upcoming meeting between Obama and PRC State Chairman and CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao will be on climate change as Obama hopes to build momentum for closer collaboration among the world's two top emitters of greenhouse gases in the run-up to the Global Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen in December. In the light of this agenda, the question of Taiwan will be sidelined. ...

"In order to secure Washington's continued support for his China-centric agenda and boost flagging approval ratings, [Taiwan President] Ma [Ying-jeou] is now doing whatever he can do please the U.S., such as deciding to reopen imports of U.S. beef. Ma hopes to secure agreement from Obama for items such as a visa-waiver program, visits by senior U.S. officials and the resumption of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) dialogue and distract attention from the inability to secure advanced F-16 C/D type jet fighters and other systems that can help redress the yawning military imbalance across the Taiwan Strait and the weakening of Taiwan's sovereignty and bargaining position with Beijing.

"We also urge the Obama administration to avoid harboring a naive mentality when dealing with Beijing, as reflected in the assumption that, after a climate control accord is reached, the PRC will permit the U.S. president to meet with the Dalai Lama or announce new arms sales to Taiwan. Beijing will gain and will make use of an advantageous leverage unless Obama is able to develop a risk 'hedging' strategy and reorient Washington's East Asian policy toward a more balanced direction that takes into account the new imbalances in the Taiwan Strait."

STANTON